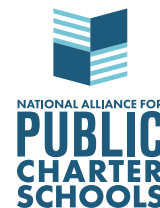


# IDENTITY AND CHARTER SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

PROFILES OF LEADERS OF COLOR: BUILDING A STRONG SCHOOL CULTURE

DECEMBER 2019



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**BY: NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC IMPACT**



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## INTRODUCTION

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How does being a person of color affect the ways in which successful public charter school leaders shape their schools and do their work? This series of reports from the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools and Public Impact profiles diverse leaders to show some of the ways their experiences and perspectives influence how they build school culture, family and community relationships, and effective staffs.

Many aspects of good leadership are universal, and we are all, of course, more than our racial and ethnic identities. At the same time, our identities – including our racial and ethnic identities – shape how we approach a situation. In these reports, we highlight how leaders say their experiences as people of color affect how they lead. Our purpose is to inform practice for the broader charter sector where leaders have considerable flexibility to act in different and innovative ways to support students.

The profiles in this series also aim to inspire more people of color to pursue charter school leadership because research makes two points clear. First, students benefit in many ways from having teachers who look like them, including achieving better academic outcomes and getting disciplined less often.<sup>1</sup> The same studies have not examined the impact of having a school leader of the same race, though it seems reasonable that the same patterns would persist. In addition, a 2019 study found that Black principals are more likely to hire Black teachers and retain those already working at their school.<sup>2</sup> Second, while more than half of the students enrolled in public schools are people of color<sup>3</sup>, the same is true of fewer than a quarter of public school principals.<sup>4</sup>

We do not intend to suggest that only people of color can effectively lead schools that serve students of color. Rather, this report aims to acknowledge the unique value leaders of color bring to their schools,

and to share thoughtful and effective practices that other leaders—regardless of their race or ethnicity—would be apt to adopt.

### ABOUT THE LEADERS PROFILED

The charter school leaders we spoke to for this series run schools across the country, from Massachusetts, California, and Louisiana to Missouri, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. Those schools include a mix of academic models, including college preparatory programs, schools that are “diverse by design,” and dual language programs. Some leaders run one school, while others oversee as many as six. They predominantly serve students of color and students from low-income families, though not all.

Similarly, the leaders we spoke with are diverse. They are Black, Latinx, Asian, and multi-racial.<sup>5</sup> They include immigrants, as well as life-long residents of the communities in which they now serve or ones much like them. Still others lived a childhood markedly different from the students in their schools. And they all bring to their schools a unique culture that reflects both their identities and their experiences.

### HOW THE REPORTS ARE ORGANIZED

Despite their differences, we found common themes across the leaders we interviewed. (See “Diverse experiences, common themes” on p. 5.) Each report in this series explores those themes through a different topic and through profiles of different leaders. Although each leader we interviewed is profiled just once, they all had insights to share on each of the report topics. The reports highlight what stood out as particularly thought-provoking or innovative, and where the leaders most clearly said their approach reflected their experience as a person of color. These short profiles offer a glimpse into what these leaders say contributed to their success and to the success of their students.

The rest of this particular report focuses on school culture. Two charter school leaders of color explain how their identities and experiences have shaped how they designed their schools and the steps they've taken to build a school environment where students can not only learn, but grow and thrive.





## DIVERSE EXPERIENCES, COMMON THEMES

Many of the practices the leaders we interviewed described are the same practices we see and hear about from high-performing school leaders generally. Yet three themes related to their experiences as people of color ran across both their individual stories and the three topics this series explores:

- 1. Addressing holes and creating opportunities based on personal experience.** Several leaders described holes in their own academic experiences as a person of color or as a child from a low-income family. In response, they laid out the sometimes nontraditional steps they have taken to address those same challenges in their own schools and to serve as role models for students and the school community. Similarly, some leaders shared opportunities that proved pivotal for them, and which they have aimed to replicate for their students and the broader community.
- 2. Emphasizing value over deficits.** At each of the schools featured in these reports, students from low-income families and students of color make up the entire student body or a significant portion of it. There are many examples and much discussion of the deficits—both real and perceived—with which many such students enter school.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the language many of the leaders used was very different. They emphasized the *value* students and their families offer. They spoke of the ways their schools address student needs by tapping into and encouraging that value, rather than seeing their primary roles as compensating for or working around deficits.
- 3. Providing an equitable educational experience to produce equitable student outcomes.** All the leaders we spoke to have high academic expectations for all students regardless of their background. But many also aim to provide students an educational experience like that of their more advantaged peers—an experience full of art, sport, travel, and the like, as well as the space to try new things and learn from their mistakes. In some cases, they even built their school around themes and curricula seldom available in low-income districts. The leaders we spoke to argue that a well-rounded, enriched student experience ultimately fosters student achievement and creates active, engaged citizens. They stress that one does not exist at the expense of the other, but that their students can have – and deserve to have – both strong academics and rich educational experiences.

Of course, these perspectives and approaches are not exclusive to leaders of color. All leaders can reflect on their own experiences and take a holistic look at the families they serve to build a school that has as its foundation a commitment to accentuate and develop the best of what is already there.

Yet these themes consistently came through the stories we heard from the leaders profiled and their statements about how they say their experiences as people of color influence the way they approach education in real and substantial ways. Hence the profiles included in this report and others in the series center around these common themes while also highlighting the ways they play out in practice.



## BUILDING A STRONG SCHOOL CULTURE

Research shows that when students feel accepted, respected, and supported at school, they perform better academically.<sup>7</sup> Put another way, a strong and positive school culture helps drive student achievement. But schools do not always cultivate a strong culture. School leaders must take intentional steps to build a community where students believe in their potential and have the confidence to take the risks necessary to fulfill that potential.<sup>8</sup>

### ABOUT THE LEADERS

The charter school leaders we interviewed in this series use various methods to help shape the beliefs, values, attitudes, and relationships that undergird the culture at their schools. Some hold regular assemblies to celebrate student success, academic and otherwise. Some provide opportunities for students to engage in their communities, such as by encouraging their participation in marches and rallies to elevate a shared challenge. Still other leaders take students on college visits and talk with parents about applying to and paying for college years before it is time as a way to set high expectations early. Nearly all take advantage of the autonomy they have as charter school leaders to introduce programs and practices seldom present in traditional district schools.

The two leaders profiled in this report stand out for the ways in which they have designed the charter schools they founded and the cultures within them:

- **KATHLEEN “KATHY” WANG** and her team at Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS) in Hadley, Massachusetts, use language to bring together students from diverse backgrounds and communities to create a common ground that cultivates respect and inclusion.
- Meanwhile, **MAURICE THOMAS** provides students at Milwaukee Excellence Charter School with opportunities to follow their dreams and shatter society’s expectations for them as Black students.

**FIGURE 1: ABOUT THE SCHOOLS\***

	PIONEER VALLEY CHINESE IMMERSION CHARTER SCHOOL	MILWAUKEE EXCELLENCE CHARTER SCHOOL
Founded	2007 <sup>9</sup>	2016 <sup>10</sup>
Grades Served	K-12	6-8 <sup>11</sup>
Number of Schools	1	1
Number of Students	529 <sup>12</sup>	239 <sup>13</sup>
% non white	48%	98%
% eco. disadvantaged	16% <sup>14</sup>	84%

\*Based on 2018-19 data unless otherwise indicated in endnotes



## STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL CULTURE REFLECT COMMON THEMES

During our interviews with Wang and Thomas, they shared how their experiences as people of color influenced the cultures they have created in their schools. Their comments highlighted the same core themes that emerged from our conversations with other leaders in this series. (See “Diverse experiences, common themes” on p. 5.)

- ▶ **Addressing holes and creating opportunities based on personal experience.** Wang’s and Thomas’s personal experiences as people of color have weighed heavily on how they designed their schools. Growing up as a Chinese immigrant in a predominantly white community helped Wang appreciate and navigate different perspectives and cultures. Hence, when she founded PVCICS, she intentionally chose a location accessible to three counties encompassing 39 different communities. Her goal was to create a region of service that would provide families an opportunity for their children to work with and learn from classmates with whom they may not have otherwise interacted. Meanwhile, Thomas felt the limitations of society’s expectations for him as a Black student early on. So, when he opened Milwaukee Excellence Charter School, he made sure to create a place that encourages his students to pursue whatever interests and passions drive them, as well as seek out new experiences and realize talents they may not have otherwise known.
- ▶ **Emphasizing value over deficits.** Both leaders have also made a point to elevate—and celebrate—all that students have to offer. PVCICS nurtures students’ ability to understand and appreciate their own identities as well as those of their diverse classmates and teachers. And in addition to learning about different cultures in the classroom, PVCICS staff encourage students to talk with and learn from one another. Students and staff participate in

community circles, weave social skills into the curriculum, and address powerful and personal topics like social conflict, discrimination, and bias.

Similarly, Maurice Thomas and his team at Milwaukee Excellence see the limitless potential of their students—a message Thomas conveys over and over again through bi-weekly meetings with students, affirming what they do well, and framing missteps as “missed opportunities” from which students can learn and grow.

- ▶ **Providing an equitable educational experience to produce equitable student outcomes.** Both school leaders have also made sure their schools offer students a range of opportunities that enrich their academic experience beyond basic reading and math. PVCICS offers students opportunities to learn Chinese and to take International Baccalaureate (IB) classes—both of which are particularly rare in high-poverty districts. Meanwhile, students at Milwaukee Excellence take coding classes beginning in sixth grade to prepare them for the AP computer science exam in high school—a subject where Black students made up less than one percent of all test-takers in 2017-18.<sup>15</sup> At Milwaukee Excellence, students also have access to a wide range of extracurricular activities and experiences ranging from ballroom dance and chess club to camping trips and track. These opportunities reinforce that the only limitations on who students are or what they can become are the ones they put on themselves.

## THE ROLE OF STRONG RELATIONSHIPS IN A STRONG SCHOOL CULTURE

In addition to the common themes above, Wang’s and Thomas’s stories made clear the importance of strong adult-student relationships to a strong school culture. At Milwaukee Excellence, Thomas personally makes a point of speaking with students twice a week—once as a school and again as a grade-level—to help create a space where they feel loved and safe. The opportunity to foster stronger relationships

between teachers and students that transfers from the field to the classroom has also been the driving force behind the school's sports programs. Wang supports much the same at PVCICS through advisory groups and other informal opportunities for students and teachers to talk about their lives and world beyond academics. At the same time, Wang says many minority students have found role models and confidantes among PVCICS's diverse staff.

The rest of this report shares the leader profiles.

# KATHLEEN WANG: DIVERSITY AND LANGUAGE TO FOSTER EQUITY

PIONEER VALLEY CHINESE IMMERSION CHARTER SCHOOL (PVCICS)

In the rural western Massachusetts town where Kathleen Wang grew up, all of her neighbors and classmates were white. Though the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Wang did not dwell on her differences. Rather, she and her upbringing felt very American to her, and her exposure to Chinese culture at home helped her to value the contrasting colors of people's lives and see issues from the perspective of others.

Wang came to realize, however, that most people know only what they see in their own neighborhoods. And in western Massachusetts, that was almost always similar to what they saw in their own homes, even when greater socioeconomic and racial diversity lay just a few streets over. Moreover, when as an adult Wang became engaged in an initiative looking at education policies and needs at the state level, she was struck by the degree of inequity resulting from a school funding system that ties education dollars to local property taxes.

When Wang decided to leave her career in software development to start her own school, she envisioned a place that would bring together students from different communities, expose them to diverse cultures, and provide all students, regardless of their ZIP code, a high-quality educational experience.

## LOCATED FOR DIVERSITY

The culture Wang created at her school, Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School (PVCICS), started with its location in Hadley, Massachusetts. The location is important because it is accessible to students in three very different counties in western Massachusetts—Hampden, Franklin, and Hampshire. Though poverty rates in all three counties are among the highest in the state, Hampden is more urban, while Hampshire is mostly suburban and Franklin is rural. Hampshire and Franklin are overwhelmingly white, while Hispanic, Black and Asian residents make up nearly 40 percent of Hampden's population.<sup>16</sup>



As a charter school, PVCICS is able to enroll students from all three counties, and as a result, students with different backgrounds and cultures who might never cross paths learn next to each other every day. Most notably, nearly half of all students at PVCICS are people of color.<sup>17</sup> “I wanted to start a school with students from a multitude of backgrounds that isn’t bound by where kids live,” says Wang. “I also know that students often do not venture outside their immediate neighborhoods, so having a school be a common place to learn and make friends was the best vehicle for integrating students from many backgrounds and communities.”

## CHINESE IMMERSION AS A TOOL BEYOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

But Wang knew that simply bringing students with different backgrounds together in the same building would not guarantee a better school experience. PVCICS needed to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, would have an equal opportunity to thrive from the start. Operating a Chinese language immersion program seemed to Wang the perfect way to equalize students.

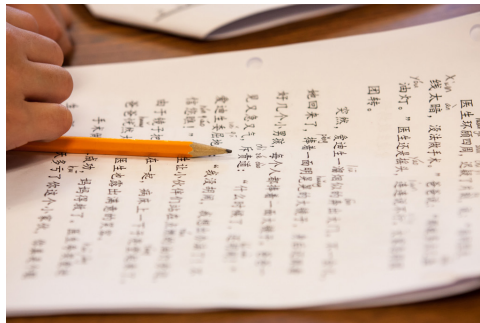




PVCICS's working belief is that "any kid can learn a language," but since most kids do not arrive at PVCICS proficient in Chinese, it level sets students within the building and distinguishes them from students in other schools. In a 2017 interview, Henry Pope III, whose two children attended PVCICS, noted that learning Chinese "provides a bond among [students]" that they all know is the focus of their learning and becomes part of their daily communication and interactions with each other.

At the same time, Chinese immersion allows Wang to address another goal she has for PVCICS—ensuring that *all* students have access to a rigorous and rich educational experience. In western Massachusetts, few schools offer world language courses, let alone Chinese, and even fewer schools in high-poverty districts do so. In addition, all PVCICS students in grades 11 and 12 take International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and work towards an International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma, which is typically reserved for top students in select schools and districts. PVCICS's commitment to its "IB for All" program grew naturally from the school's mission of Chinese for all. Both help PVCICS provide educational opportunities that foster the development of 21st century skills and give all students confidence that they can succeed after high school.

Student performance results indicate that Wang's approach is working. In 2018-19, PVCICS students had both higher proficiency rates and growth scores in English Language Arts (ELA) and math than their state peers, and the school graduated 100 percent of its first three senior classes.<sup>19</sup> Further, in 2015, PVCICS received the prestigious Confucius Classrooms of the Year Award, which recognizes excellence in curriculum and cultural richness in just 10 schools around the world each year.<sup>20</sup>



## LIFE LESSONS THAT GO BEYOND A TEST

Graduating successful scholars is just one part of PVCICS's mission, though. Wang believes it is equally important that students are open to other cultures and develop the empathy they need to become responsible and effective citizens. "Understanding other people's cultures reveals differences, but also similarities, which allows students to see each other as fellow students," says



Wang. "Being culturally aware means understanding a person's heritage and perspective so that differences are better understood. Race and skin color are like a wrapper around one's culture. If we look only at race or skin color, it's easy to simply say there are differences."

Again, the school's Chinese immersion program plays a central role, providing the opportunity for PVCICS students to experience and appreciate a culture much different from their own. According to Pope, learning about Chinese culture helps PVCICS students gain understanding that the world is larger than what they know where they live in Massachusetts.

But PVCICS also takes other steps to help students build critical communication and social-emotional skills needed to live in a diverse society. It starts

with community circles at the beginning of the year so that everyone gets to know each other. Teachers then weave social skills into the regular curriculum, selecting reading materials, for example, that address topics like social conflicts, discrimination, and racial and cultural biases, and helping students discuss them with sensitivity and civility. Informal opportunities, including advisory periods and lunches in the classroom, also offer opportunities for teachers to talk with students about culturally and developmentally relevant topics, such as dealing with conflict and handling peer pressure inside and outside of school.

The diversity of PVCICS's teaching staff makes these lessons all the more compelling; half are people of color, including some who have immigrated from other countries. "Having a diverse teaching staff fosters the opportunity for students to learn from school staff who can teach from firsthand experience about different cultures and what it means to have a different background," Wang says. For minority students, having that role model helps them feel safe talking about their own experiences or current events; and for white students, these teachers have a perspective that helps them "try on someone else's shoes" and understand what it's like to feel marginalized, says Wang.

Straight talk with parents about the school's mission and the communities it serves is also key. When, for example, a parent was concerned about the violence and foul language in a summer reading book addressing racial profiling, Wang had a frank conversation with her. She pointed out that students were already hearing about many hard realities through the news and social media, so including the book provided an opportunity for open and honest dialogue.

Perhaps most powerful, though, are the natural interactions that PVCICS students have with one another, says Wang. "Kids learn from each other. Friendships and connections form in classrooms and on the playground between kids from different towns who would never have otherwise connected."

## MAURICE THOMAS: SMASHING EXPECTATIONS FOR WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A BLACK STUDENT

MILWAUKEE EXCELLENCE CHARTER SCHOOL



**S**eventy percent of students at Rufus King High School were Black when Maurice Thomas attended. There were 12 Black students on its basketball team, yet Thomas was one of just five Black students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus. From high school to college to his first teaching experiences, Maurice Thomas saw how society created expectations about where Black students should be and what they could do. No one thought twice of a Black student on the playing field, Thomas noticed, but no one seemed to push those same students to stand in a chemistry lab, in an art studio, or on a theater stage.

Milwaukee Excellence Charter School is Thomas's response. Located less than two miles from his old high school, nearly all Milwaukee Excellence students are Black, and they are both winning sports championships and closing achievement gaps. In 2017-18, Milwaukee Excellence earned a perfect score for student growth, with student proficiency more than doubling in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math compared to the previous year.<sup>21</sup> "At

the end of the day, I want to create a place where it's OK for Black kids to feel nerdy and have fun," Thomas says. "I want kids to be OK being whoever they are...I want to shatter any expectations being put on Black people."

### WELL BEYOND BASICS

At Milwaukee Excellence Charter, shattering expectations starts with all students taking classes in computer science and coding, subjects in which Black students are grossly underrepresented. Of nearly 1,400 Wisconsin students who took an AP test in computer science in 2017-18, just eight students—0.06 percent—were Black.<sup>22</sup> "[These numbers show that] the next Bill Gates is not going to be a Black girl from Milwaukee if the trend continues," Thomas said. "If my students are going to be part of the future, I want to make sure they aren't being left behind." That's why all Milwaukee Excellence students learn coding beginning in grade 6, and they will all take an AP computer science exam before they graduate from high school.

School is not limited to academics, though. At Milwaukee Excellence, students have had opportunities to learn ballroom dance, join the art club, and cheerlead. The school also makes sure to offer students out-of-school activities that expose them to new experiences. Students visit a different college each year, travelling to St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Milwaukee Excellence has taken students camping in Indiana and Georgia, too. Thomas's team is also working to offer students an international experience so that traveling overseas will feel normal by the time they reach college. "I could count on one hand the number of times I left the city," Thomas notes. "I want to give students the experiences that I didn't have."

In addition, Thomas looks to hire Black teachers to help students expand their ideas of what they might accomplish. "I told my staff on day one that



we cannot be a school where fewer than half of our teachers are Black,” Thomas says. “We hire the best people, but we’re intentional that our kids will see themselves...we’re trying to prove the point that Black people can teach math and biology.” In 2017-18, approximately 55 percent of the school’s teachers were Black.

### AFFIRMATIONS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

In designing Milwaukee Excellence, Thomas made a point of approaching student discipline differently as well. National data show that Black students are suspended and expelled two to three times more often than white students, with Wisconsin having one of the largest disparities in the country.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in Thomas’s perspective, too many “no excuses” charter schools seem to stifle student voice in the name of discipline. As a child who was pushed into more challenging classes not because he was the brightest, but because he “smiled a lot and sat up straight,” Thomas is particularly attuned to the need to create an environment where students develop the confidence to speak up in class without constant concern for order.

One part of his solution is reframing slipups as missed opportunities from which students can learn and improve upon in the future. For example, students don’t go to detention at Milwaukee Excellence; rather, if they act out, they may have to attend building character class after school, where they reflect on their choices. During that time, they might learn about impulsive decisions and why they make them. They also take steps to restore the relationship with the teacher with whom they struggled by discussing what happened and the impact of those actions. And teachers may end up walking students home afterwards. “We need to come every day with

an unconditional positive regard, no matter what happened the day before,” Thomas explains. “Our school needs to be a place where kids can always bounce back.”

At the same time, Thomas and his staff make a point of affirming what students do well and celebrating their successes. They brag about student accomplishments on social media and publicly reward students who meet their goals.

Thomas has also proven willing to hold staff accountable and to have difficult conversations when he needs to. In one instance, several Black

teachers approached him with concerns about the tone a white teacher used with a student. Together, they dug more deeply into the teachers’ concerns, including what appropriate student consequences look like and whether and how a teacher’s race should affect how they discipline students. That conversation then led to a larger staff discussion, including break outs by racial affinity groups before reconvening to share additional questions and conclusions focused on what students need and deserve from all teachers at school.

Other practices also reinforce the school’s focus on students having a positive learning experience. Thomas makes sure to set consistent expectations and arm students with a common language to help them navigate school. There is homework every

day, exit tickets at the end of each class, and quizzes on Fridays. And there is a bias toward student learning, even if it means having to replace some materials along the way. When teachers raised concerns about students bringing the school’s Chromebooks home, for example, Thomas’s response was clear and simple: “I don’t care if they break if kids are learning.”



## FOUNDATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Strong relationships between students and teachers, however, underlie everything else at Milwaukee Excellence. As Thomas explains, students need to have “voice,” meaning that they have space to express what they are thinking and feeling. But to create that space, they must feel loved by and have a relationship with the adults in the building. “The teachers [at Milwaukee Excellence] are compassionate and care about the kids,” says parent Audrey Haney. “When my son is having an issue, they talk to him and take time to help him figure out his problem so he can get back on track.”

Twice a week—once as a whole school and again by grade—Thomas also personally meets with students to discuss the school’s core values and whatever else might need airtime. Sometimes he just talks; other times he sings or performs a rap to get students’ attention and show that being silly and into learning is cool. “He [Thomas] interacts with students all the time,” says parent Leola Williams. “He sings with them and dances with them.”

Relationships are also why the school started a track and field program. Thomas was a little skeptical when the program launched in the school’s third year, but then he saw how students responded to teachers who not only gave up their Saturday to support them, but also arrived at dawn with bananas and peanut butter to keep them fueled. Winning the track championship felt good, but it came second to the relationships students cultivated with coaches, which then propelled them in the classroom.

It’s a trend grade 7 teacher Jaya Robinson has also noticed. “A lot of my colleagues realized their relationship with the students they coached shifted in the classroom.” Similarly, her relationship with students in the clubs she leads have deepened. “[Students in step club] got closer to me and more open with me. They’re able to come to me when they have issues.” Today, Milwaukee Excellence Charter School offers its more than 400 students the opportunity to participate on eight sport teams and in 11 clubs.

Judging by the data, those relationships are paying

dividends academically. In 2017-18, Milwaukee Excellence received the city’s top score on the state report card, which also put it No. 23 out of more than 2,300 schools statewide. But Milwaukee Excellence’s many successes are just getting started; Thomas has high expectations for what his students will achieve—and the expectations they will smash.

In the meantime, Thomas and his team will continue to show students all that they’re capable of. “I get to stand up and really be a mirror to kids every day. I don’t take that lightly,” Thomas says. “As a Black person telling them that [they can be and do anything they want], it means something to them.”



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Goldhaber, D., Theobald, R. & Tien, C. 2015. "The Theoretical and Empirical Arguments for Diversifying the Teacher Workforce: A Review of the Evidence." Center for Education & Data Research. <https://www.cedr.us/papers/working/CEDR%20WP%202015-9.pdf>; Rosen, J. 2016. "Race Biases Teachers' Expectations for Students." Johns Hopkins University. <http://releases.jhu.edu/2016/03/30/race-biases-teachers-expectations-for-students/>

<sup>2</sup>Bartanen, B. & Grissom, J. (2019). School Principal Race and the Hiring and Retention of Racially Diverse Teachers. Annenberg Institute at Brown University. <https://edworkingpapers.com/sites/default/files/ai19-59.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup>Enrollment projections reported by the U.S. Department of Education in 2017 indicate that in 2019, students enrolled in public schools are 15 percent black, 28 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, 3 percent two or more races, and 47 percent white. National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.) 'Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2027.' [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17\\_203.50.asp?refer=raceindicators](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_203.50.asp?refer=raceindicators)

<sup>4</sup>The 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) found that among 90,400 public school principals of K-12 schools in the United States, 78 percent were non-Hispanic white; 11 percent were non-Hispanic black or African American; 8 percent were Hispanic, and 3 percent another race/ethnicity (i.e., American Indian/Alaska Native; non-Hispanic; Asian, non-Hispanic; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic; and two or more races, non-Hispanic. These data can be found at: Taie, S., Goldring, R., and Spiegelman, M. (2017). Characteristics of Public Elementary and Secondary School Principals in the United States: Results from the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey, First Look. *National Center for Education Statistics*. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017070.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup>This report and others in the series focus on identity. Though some of the leaders may appear to share the same ethnic or racial identities, the words they used to describe themselves differed at times. In response, we chose to use the same terms the leaders profiled used, even if it meant using different terms in different parts of the series.

<sup>6</sup>"Deficit thinking" or a "deficit model" presumes that some students, particularly students who are minorities, come from low-income families, or are disabled, are deficient in some way and thus cannot be held to the same achievement standards as their peers. See Valencia, R., ed. 1997. *The Evolution of Deficit Thinking: Educational Thought and Practice*. Psychology Press.

<sup>7</sup>See for example: MacNeil, A., Prater, D., and Busch, S. 2009. The Effects of School Culture and Climate on Student Achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 12 (1) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13603120701576241>; Stewart, E. 2008. School Structural Characteristics, Student Effort, Peer Associations, and Parental Involvement: The Influence of School- and Individual-Level Factors on Academic Achievement. *Education and Urban Society*, 40 (2) <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c9a7/63a43d56985fc2679ec8377c93ce583adb70.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup>Renchler, R. 1992. Student Motivation, School Culture, and Academic Achievement: What School Leaders Can Do. *ERIC*. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3ec3/8b8b2b1101259ee954c2384665a8c8b1a4af.pdf>; Mees, G. 2008. The Relationships among Principal Leadership, School Culture, and Student Achievement in Missouri Middle Schools. *University of Missouri – Columbia*. <https://mospace.umsystem.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10355/5540/research.pdf?sequ>.

<sup>9</sup>Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School. 2019. About Us. <http://www.pvcics.org/about-us>.

<sup>10</sup>Milwaukee Public Schools. 2019. Milwaukee Excellence Charter. <https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/Schools/Milwaukee-Excellence-Charter.htm>.

<sup>11</sup>Milwaukee Excellence Charter School. 2018. Home Page. <http://www.mkeexcellence.org/>.

<sup>12</sup>Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. 2019. Enrollment by School/Race, School Year 2018-19. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/default.html?yr=1819>.

<sup>13</sup>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2018. Accountability Report Cards. <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards/home>. Notes: School enrollment data is for the 2017-18 school year. Milwaukee Excellence Charter School is listed in the Milwaukee School District on the report card website.

<sup>14</sup>Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. 2019. Enrollment for Special Populations by District, School Year 2018-2019. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/default.html?yr=1819>.

<sup>15</sup>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports."

<sup>16</sup>Hampden's population is 62% white, 26% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 2% Asian. Franklin's population is 91% white, 4% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 1% Asian. Hampshire's population is 83% white, 6% Hispanic, 3% Black, and 6% Asian. U.S. Census Bureau. 2018. *American Community Survey 1-year estimates*. <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US25013-hampden-county-ma/>; <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US25011-franklin-county-ma/>; <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US25015-hampshire-county-ma/>;

<sup>17</sup>The student body is 52 percent white, 18% Asian, 8% Black, 7% Hispanic, and includes multi-racial students. The school is less diverse by some other metrics, however; it enrolls lower rates of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and high needs students than the surrounding counties. Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). Enrollment by School/Race, School Year 2018-19. Available at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll/default.html?yr=1819>.

<sup>18</sup>In ELA, 70% of PVCIC students met or exceeded expectations, compared to 59% of Hadley Public School students and 53% of students across the state. In math, 63% of PVCIC students met or exceeded expectations, compared to 52% of Hadley Public School (HPS) students and 50% of Massachusetts students. PVCIC's average student growth percentile (SGP) in ELA was 58.1, while HPS's was 44.8 and the state's was 49.4. In math, PVCIC's average SGP was 50.2, while the district's was 48.9 and the state's was 49.7. Proficiency rates calculated by adding number of students who met or exceeded expectations across all tested grades and dividing by the total across all grades. Performance data for PVCIC, Hadley Public Schools, and state found at: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2019. Next Generation MCAS Achievement Results. <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/nextgenmcas.aspx>.

<sup>19</sup>Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2019. "2018 Graduate Rate Report (School) for All Students 4-Year Graduate Rate." <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/gradrates.aspx> Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. 2019. "2017 Graduate Rate Report (School) for All Students 4-Year Graduate Rate." <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/gradrates.aspx>. PVCICS provided 2019 graduation rate data.

<sup>20</sup>Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School. 2016. "Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School Receives Global Excellence Award." Sampan. <https://sampan.org/2016/01/pioneer-valley-chinese-immersion-charter-school-receives-global-excellence-award/>. The Confucius Institute, a nonprofit organization, headquartered in China, was established in 2004 to promote Chinese language and culture overseas. See Confucius Institute. 2014. "Confucius Institute Headquarters." [http://english.hanban.org/node\\_7716.htm](http://english.hanban.org/node_7716.htm)

<sup>21</sup>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Accountability report cards: Milwaukee Excellence." <https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards/home>

<sup>22</sup>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. "Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports."

<sup>23</sup>U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. 2014. Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (School Discipline). <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf> <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf>; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. 2018. 2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection: School Climate and Safety. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/school-climate-and-safety.pdf>; Losen, D, Hodson, C, Keith, M. A., Morrison, K, & Belway, S. 2015. Are we closing the school discipline gap? UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies. [https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-the-school-discipline-gap/AreWeClosingTheSchoolDisciplineGap\\_FINAL221.pdf](https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-the-school-discipline-gap/AreWeClosingTheSchoolDisciplineGap_FINAL221.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>OSSE. "District of Columbia: 2015-16 Equity Report." [https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2015\\_Equity\\_Report\\_Citywide\\_District%20of%20Columbia.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2015_Equity_Report_Citywide_District%20of%20Columbia.pdf); OSSE. "Washington Yu Ying PCS: 2015-16 equity report." [https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2015\\_Equity\\_Report\\_Public%20Charter%20School\\_Washington%20Yu%20Ying%20PCS.pdf](https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/publication/attachments/2015_Equity_Report_Public%20Charter%20School_Washington%20Yu%20Ying%20PCS.pdf)

<sup>26</sup>In 2018-19, 56 percent of Yu Ying students were proficient in ELA, compared to 37 percent in the District of Columbia; 57 percent of Yu Ying students were proficient in math, compared to 31 percent in the District of Columbia. OSSE 2019. 2018-19 Detailed PARCC and MSAA Performance Results. <https://osse.dc.gov/page/2018-19-parcc-results-and-resources>

<sup>27</sup>According to Missouri state data, CWC Kansas City did not report proficiency data to the state in the 2017-2018 school year.

<sup>28</sup>California Department of Education 2018. Search Smarter Balanced Test Results. <https://caaspp.cde.ca.gov/sb2018/Search>.



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